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Note verbale dated 24 May 2017 from the Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

The Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations in New York presents its compliments to the President of the Security Council and has the honour to attach herewith a copy of the speech made by the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, at the Arab Islamic American Summit in Riyadh on 21 May 2017 (see annex).

The Permanent Mission requests that the present note verbale and its annex be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 24 May 2017 from the Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic and English]

Speech by President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, at the Arab-Islamic-American Summit held in Riyadh on 21 May 2017

My brother, His Majesty King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,

Your Excellency President Donald Trump, President of the United States of America,

Your Majesties, Highnesses, and Excellencies,

Allow me at the outset to convey to you the greetings of Egypt, with its Muslims and Copts, its civilization that stretches back thousands of years, its land that has been a crossroads of Islam, Christianity and Judaism, and its outstanding contributions to the history of humanity and science, all of which have made it a symbol of moderation and enlightenment.

Our meeting today, in addition to its political importance, has a symbolic significance that no one could miss. It reflects our firm resolve to renew the partnership between Arab Islamic countries and the United States of America, thereby dispelling the misguided illusions of the advocates of a clash of civilizations, who can only envision relations among peoples as a conflict in which one side aims to eliminate the other. Such people fail to recognize the true significance of civilizational and cultural diversity, which allows for the enrichment of life and human experience by elevating the values of cooperation, tolerance, acceptance of the other and respect for the right to differ.

You will agree that all of us have a clear interest in enshrining those human values. We also have a key role in countering the causes of divisions, conflicts and extremism, by which I mean specifically the danger of terrorism, which has become a formidable threat to the peoples of the entire world.

Countering the threat of terrorism and rooting it out require, in tandem with security and military measures, a holistic approach that encompasses political, ideological and development aspects. However, the real question that needs to be seriously and frankly addressed is that of how this holistic approach can be implemented on the ground and on what basis.

In that regard, allow me to put forward the following four important aspects:

First, we must talk about counter-terrorism in a comprehensive manner. That means confronting all terrorist organizations without discrimination. It is not possible to limit the confrontation to one or two organizations. Terrorist organizations operate in a cancerous network and are interconnected in most parts of the world by numerous bonds, including ideology, financing and military, security and intelligence coordination. Therefore, it is not feasible to confine the confrontation to one theatre of operations to the exclusion of others. Successfully eradicating the threat of terrorism requires confronting all terrorist organizations comprehensively and simultaneously on all fronts.

In that regard, you all know that Egypt is fighting a ferocious war against terrorist organizations in northern Sinai. We continue to score victories and make steady progress, and are committed to maintaining the pace and scope of those

efforts so as to root out terrorism with minimum losses while protecting civilian lives.

Our battle is part and parcel of the global war against terrorism. We are committed to defeating the terrorist organizations and extending our hand in assistance and partnership with all allies in the fight against those organizations everywhere.

Secondly, confronting terrorism comprehensively means addressing all its dimensions, including financing, weapons provision and political and ideological support. A terrorist is not only the one who bears arms, but also the one who provides training, financing, weapons and political and ideological cover.

Let me speak frankly and ask: Where are the safe havens that are offered for terrorist organizations to train their fighters, treat their wounded and replenish their equipment? Who buys the natural resources they control, such as oil? Who facilitates their trade in antiquities and narcotics? Where do they receive financial donations from? How do they manage to maintain a media presence through outlets that have been happy to become propaganda platforms for terrorist organizations?

Anyone who does any of those things is a key partner in terrorism. Unfortunately, there are States involved in supporting and funding terrorist organizations and in offering them safe havens. There are also States that refuse to share information and databases on foreign terrorist fighters, even with INTERPOL.

The third element of the Egyptian vision for confronting terrorism is putting an end to the terrorist organizations' ability to recruit new fighters, through a comprehensive approach at both the ideological and intellectual levels. The fight against terrorism is primarily an intellectual fight. Successfully confronting the terrorist organizations must include paralyzing their ability to recruit and attract sympathizers with deviant interpretations of religious teachings that that distort the tolerant essence of true religion for political purposes.

You probably all recall that two years ago I proposed an initiative to renew religious discourse with a view to a comprehensive cultural revolution that would highlight the essential tolerant nature of Islam, and confront attempts to hijack that religion and barricade it behind misinterpretations and pretexts that justify crimes that have no place in our religious teachings.

I am following up on implementation of this initiative with the established religious institutions in Egypt — above all Al-Azhar, which is the authority within moderate Islam — and in cooperation with leading intellectuals and scholars throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds. I am confident that this aspect is no less important than operations in the field to eradicating terrorist organizations.

Last but not least, we must admit that one of the essential conditions for an environment conducive to the growth of terrorist organizations is the disintegration and instability of national institutions in our Arab region.

It is no secret that over the past few years, we have seen heavily financed systematic attempts to undermine our States' institutions and plunge the region into a destructive vacuum. This has created perfect conditions for the emergence of terrorist organizations and the exhaustion of our peoples in sectarian and ethnic conflicts.

Filling the vacuum in which terrorism grows and proliferates requires exerting every effort to restore and reinforce the unity, independence and efficiency of national institutions in the Arab world. That includes meeting the aspirations of the peoples for the revival of the State by laying the foundations for political, economic and social reform, committing to standards of good governance, respecting human

rights, instilling concepts of the rule of law and citizenship, respecting women and empowering youth.

Over the past few years, Egypt has set a historic example by restoring its national institutions in a peaceful and civil manner by implementing the sweeping popular will that rejected all attempts to hijack the institutions of state and the national identity forged by Egypt over the course of its long history. After regaining their State, the Egyptian people have continued to build and enhance the capacity of their national institutions, achieving progress in political economic and social reforms day after day.

Egypt also fully supports all efforts to resolve the region's various crises so as to maintain the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of national States and to protect them from the forces of extremism and sectarian fragmentation. Egypt categorically rejects all attempts to intervene in the domestic affairs of Arab and Islamic countries or attempts to fuel sectarianism, which provides a fertile ground for the proliferation of terrorism and the collapse of the national State.

I also wish to make clear that eradicating terrorism will not have any tangible success unless the Palestinian issue is settled through a just, comprehensive and final resolution on the basis of a two-State solution and the relevant legitimate international terms of reference, which would provide a new reality for the region's peoples and would enable them to enjoy prosperity, peace and security. Such a settlement would also eliminate one of the pretexts that terrorists use to justify their horrendous crimes.

Your Majesties, Highnesses, and Excellencies,

I wanted to share with you these four aspects of Egypt's counter-terrorism vision out of our conviction that terrorism is the biggest threat that we all face. This comprehensive approach, based on the four aspects that I have mentioned, ought to lay the foundation for a new phase of cooperation among our countries and peoples.

I should also like to express my appreciation for the insightful vision of President Trump, who, since assuming office, has proposed a robust policy to address the challenges of terrorism, which he has reaffirmed before us here today. I have no doubt that the United States is capable of creating a much needed international momentum for the comprehensive strategy that I have outlined today. That would include formulating a clear action plan with a specified timeframe to eliminate funding and weapons for terrorist networks and deprive them of safe havens. It would also include actively confronting movements that conceal their true nature and market themselves as political entities, when in fact they cultivate terrorists and promote their infiltration into societies to exploit the opportunities to prey on the popular will to practice their extremist and exclusionary policies.

Egypt has always been a pioneer of peace and open to various peoples and cultures. The Egyptian people will always be the first to extend the hand of cooperation and communication with their friends and partners in the region and the entire world.

May God grant us success in doing right by our peoples.

May peace be upon you.